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PETER CLAVER.

PETER CLAVER:

A SKETCH OF HIS LIFE AND LABORS

IN BEHALF OF

THE AFRICAN SLAVE.



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To
HIS EXCELLENCY
GOVERNOR JOHN A. ANDREW,*
THE EARNEST, SINCERE, AND DEVOTED FRIEND OF THE
COLORED RACE
IN THIS CONTINENT, THIS SKETCH OF THE
LIFE AND LABORS
OF A NOBLE, DEVOTED, AND EFFICIENT FRIEND
OF THE
AFRICAN SLAVE
IS INSCRIBED.

* Oct. 30, 1867. While the first pages of our MS. were being put in type, John A. Andrew breathed his last. It was he who suggested the idea of giving a narrative of Peter Claver's labors in behalf of the poor Negro. He wished also that we should gather what other relics of Christian history, bearing on the same subject, we could glean. But now our heart is desponding, and our hand has lost its cunning.

P R E F A C E.

THIS work was finished on this anniversary of "Emancipation Day," and only within three days of that in which our noble Chief Magistrate will resign the gubernatorial chair.

I send forth these humble pages as a testimony of sincere admiration, and cordial recognition, on the part of a foreigner, of the highly important services rendered by our Governor to the cause of freedom and of humanity, as well as to the General Government, not unmingled with sentiments of personal gratitude and friendship.

——— MASS., JANUARY 1, 1866.

LIFE OF PETER CLAVER.



I.

The Slave-Trade in New Grenada.

No modern slave-pen has ever witnessed such horrors as were formerly enacted under the torrid sky of Carthagena, the great seaport and mart of New Grenada. In the language of a French writer, — when under a heaven of molten lead, beaten by tropic storms that will wither the stoutest frames, to them exposed, season after season, by day and by night, the imported African had wasted the best years of his existence, he was cast away by his master, like a worn-out tool, to die a death of despair, as he had lived a life that had no hope !

And what hopes could those wretches have? Look at that white sail looming from a distance,—a slave-pen, floating on the sea! In the vessel's hold are huddled together eight, nine, ten hundred Africans, of all ages, and of both sexes, in perfect nudity, and with chains on their feet. They swelter under the heat of the torrid zone, are fed like very brutes with the vilest food, and wallow in filth. Add, that through those days and nights of slow navigation, in continued dread of the lash, their naturally savage disposition is rendered even more savage, suspicious, and despairing by the thought that they have been bought for the purpose of mixing their blood with the caulking of Spanish vessels, and their fat and marrow will be sold in Carthage's market. Oh, what a hell upon earth! No, this language is not too strong. Human nature cannot be sunk any lower! Deeper misery cannot be imagined! Utter, unappreciable torture of the mind, acute, unmeas-

urable suffering of the body! Yet those bodies have received from the plastic hand of The Father a susceptible sensitiveness to the charms of the universe, but those charms are withheld from them; yet those souls are made in the image and likeness of The Father, but their Christian master tears that image and likeness and treads it under foot!

Nor is this all. The trade was most infamous. A human being bartered away in exchange for a few pieces of silver, a gallon of rum, or the horns of a bull! The early missionaries of New Grenada inform us that an average of twelve such cargoes entered every year the port of Carthagená. But those devoted men seem to be at a loss how to express their feelings when such vessels that were scourged by the small-pox entered the port. Hundreds had been hoisted out of the hold and thrown into the sea. On the ocean-bed a line of skulls marks the slave-ship's path from Congo to Carthagená! But how to de-

scribe the condition of those who have escaped death? With emaciated bodies, — filth and corruption trickling from nostrils and eyes, ears and lips, — their countenances betraying idiocy, — startling at the least approach of the master, — dreading the lifted hand, ay, the approach of a white man, — they are hurried to the pen reserved for them on land. Thence they will be rebought into captivity by the miner and the planter.

To receive such outcasts, to welcome and press them to his heart, to console them, to humanize and christianize them, PETER CLAVER, the subject of this sketch, devoted forty long years of his existence.

II.

The Apostle of Carthagenæ.

I MUST preface that Claver's labors went no farther than offering sympathy to, and alleviating the sufferings of, the slave. He could do no more. Yet many who will honor these pages with a perusal will think as I did, while searching ancient records and modern histories, in reference to the subject, "After all, Peter Claver cannot be held up as a pattern to us, who have borne the burden and the heat of the day in order to achieve the freedom of the poor slave." Ay, yes; but what has our own government been able to do for the last half century, with all its power and prestige? And were it not that the slave oligarchy have, by their own foolhardiness,

cut the very sinews and hamstrings of their system, and lain their hands in the lion's mouth, would not the hydra of slavery be still as rampant as ever? Again: let us not imagine that the Spaniards and Spanish colonists of 1615 thought as we do in 1865. Refinement of thought and principle has kept pace with the advance of civilization and of arts. Even the struggle of the Christian church against the barbarism of slavery obtained more lasting victories as the age advanced in civilization of thought and the perfection of arts, the which is confirmed by the enactment of such cruelties as have been witnessed and endured by our unfortunate soldiers. Such cruelties could be countenanced only by minds wedded to slavery. Political prisoners and criminals have been treated, even in the light of this day, with equal heartlessness in Russia, because the demon of serfdom is still hovering over her borders. But slavery is totally behind the age, and those who still

affect to uphold it are indeed a drag upon the development of Christian civilization and refinement.

Our slave owners were, until lately, the counterpart of the old Spanish slave trader. Then take a whole nation of such, and pit against it an humble, isolated missionary, a man of peace, — eminently so, — and do you think that he alone, with no other power than that of the cross, could stem the current? Let it, then, be kept in mind that I do not hold before my reader the life and example of an abolitionist, in the truest and noblest sense of the word. I only wish to introduce to the American people a man, who, justly and properly, can be set up as a pattern to those who earnestly and honestly work for the elevation of a down-trodden race, — a noble model to such as will not allow that a difference in color should be a line of demarcation between souls, all created in the *same* Image and Likeness.

I aim at nothing else. Slavery is gone, thank God! But the work before us is one of gigantic proportions. Shall we be able to cope with its difficulties? There is only one path that will lead to a sure triumph. Peter Claver points to it: the way of *Christian patience and brotherly love*.*

I beg leave to add one more remark, in order that the reader may not be disappointed in his anticipations. Claver could not restore his beloved African to that position in life to which the latter's human nature entitled him, had even his aspirations been bent in that direction. Hence he did only that, which, in his opinion, would procure for the slave all the happiness he could enjoy under existing circumstances. This example should not be lost to us. We are apt to look for the *Best*,

* Beautifully did General Howard point to the only method which will overcome all difficulties arising from the emancipation of the colored people, when he said, "Nothing but the spirit of Christ can overcome them." Any other "spirit" will only aggravate the difficulties now lying in the way.

and forego the *Good*. The clank of the slave's chain shall grate on our ears and our hearts no more. The Negro is now entitled, by the law of the land, to all the privileges of American citizenship. Claver's example of patience and forbearance will not be studied in vain by the American people.

It seems as if we were in the same predicament, in many respects, in which Claver was placed. He did the Slaves — with us, however, emancipated — all the good they were susceptible of, *for the time being*. Let us do for the Freedmen precisely the same. Oh that all friends of the colored people were prompted by motives as sincere and as honest as those which inspired Peter Claver, the Apostle of Carthagenal !

III.

Peter Claver's Early Days.

PETER CLAVER, a man remarkable for his heroic virtues and an indomitable perseverance, was born, A. D. 1585, in Verdù, a township in the diocese of Vich, province of Cataloña, Spain. Peter, his father, and Ann Sobecana, his mother, were both of noble descent. According to contemporary historians, the candor of young Peter's soul was transparent through his countenance. His manners were full of vivacity, but tempered by a maiden's modesty. His affection to his parents he exhibited in prompt, unreserved, and trusting obedience. Ingenuous in his intercourse, most affable and gentle, reserved

but not affected, he won the love of all who knew him in his infancy and boyhood.

At a proper age he was sent to the Jesuit College of Barcelona, and went through a complete course of belles-lettres, from first rudiments to the study of Rhetoric and Eloquence. He gave such satisfaction, by his conduct, perseverance, and success, that the bishop, of his own accord, admitted him to the Ecclesiastical State, and administered to him the Tonsure. An inheritance was then mystically bestowed on him: its riches he enjoyed for the last forty years of his life. Had Peter then any remote anticipation of what Heaven had in reserve for him? "Thou wilt restore my *Inheritance* to me" are the words of the Ordination. When sung by the choir and the acolytes, and in rich tones re-echoed through the vaults of the cathedral, did they convey any particular meaning to his mind,—touch any special chord of his heart? . . .

On the 7th of August, A. D. 1602, Peter Claver, being then seventeen years old, enrolled himself under the banner of the Company of Jesus. It was the camp, in those ages, whence the undaunted champions of the Cross and of civilization were ordered to the farthest ends of the earth, to humanize the savage, to free the bondsman, and to hold out the blessed hopes of immortality before those who had heretofore sat "in darkness and in the shadow of death."

He was sent to make his novitiate in Taragona. During those ten years of noviceship, as well as, to a certain degree, before he had entered upon it, Peter was often observed to be preoccupied by some thought that engrossed his attention so as to render him almost absent-minded. Again, he was very often found, by day and by night, in attitude of deep prayer, and so protracted that the authority of his superiors had to interfere, lest the health of the youthful apostle

should be endangered. Lastly, towards none did he show such marked predilection as the poor and the ignorant. If "the boy is father to the man," we may well make a note of these traits in Peter Claver's character. We shall witness their development as he gradually ascends towards the meridian of his life. In the archives of the Jesuit province of Cataluña, a little book has long been preserved, all in Claver's handwriting, and dating from his earliest youth. He carried it constantly on his person, to his very last hour. It was a record of what inspirations he received in his communings with Heaven: it contained memoranda of such practical reflections and well-defined principles as should guide him through the minutest details of life. In that book he enters a noble resolve, to aim at naught else but to acquire a habit of thought, feelings, and aspirations, — a second nature, as it were, — by which all his endeavors should be exclusively directed to the enlightenment and

regeneration of souls, cost him what it may, even an ignominious and cruel death. We shall have evidence enough to become convinced that the heroic and extraordinary goal was attained. To do good to a forlorn negro became the very life of his soul !

IV.

His Theological Studies.

THE usual time of probation being concluded, Claver was sent to the Island of Majorca to attend lectures on Moral and Natural Philosophy. Here he contracted an intimate friendship with a venerable old man, of little learning in the ways of the world, but far advanced in justice and godliness. By his advice and exhortations the youthful candidate was greatly encouraged to perfect himself for the mysteries of his future apostleship. Upon one occasion, Peter and his aged friend were deploring together the darkness and misery in which so many souls in the New World were buried, when Alonzo Rodriguez, as if stung by a sudden pang, cried, all at once,

the bitter tears gushing from his eyes, "How strange ! how strange ! the love of God cannot navigate those waters which are whitened by so many sails swollen by the avarice of man ! and so many souls, beyond those waters, made in the image and likeness of God ! And has not a ransom been disbursed for them, of an exceedingly great price, even as great as for our own? . . . Ah ! Peter, Peter ! dearest son ! why not go and apply the benefit of that ransom ? Faint is the love that cannot endure much. . . . God beckons thee to *that* post ! Oh, if you only knew the great wealth there reserved for thee !"

Which words, uttered with a prophetic voice and in a tone almost of inspiration, touched Peter's inmost heart, brought sweet calm to his soul, and diffused an ethereal light over his mind. From that moment *he saw his way*. The goal had been pointed to him ; many will be the obstacles to breast, arduous the difficulties to surmount, keen and dis-

heartening the trials. But Peter felt a conviction that God himself pointed to the mark ; it was His will that bade him go. At the same time a voice from heaven, in the calm intercourse of prayer, assures him, in unmistakable whispers, that his own will shall be nerved with the power of God's will itself.

Peter did not delay to apply for the missions of South America. Crowds of brutalized African slaves, disgorged in their filth and abjection from the holds of those bulky and black Catalan galleons, are forever swarming before his eyes. The sight sickens him at heart, and he pours out the anguish of his soul in groans, during his prayers. No immediate assent is given to his request. Meanwhile, he is ordered to Barcelona, the head-quarters of the province.

At the moment of going aboard, the passengers, all but our Peter, dismayed at the forlorn appearance of the crazy ship, refuse to take passage in it. Claver remarks that

"If the vessel is weak, God is strong," and boldly steps aboard. His eleven companions bargain for their passage on another, better fitted and stronger craft; but, midway between Majorca and the shores of Cataloña, they all become a prey to the Algerine corsairs. Claver arrived speedily and safely at his destination.

V.

Appointed Missionary to Carthagenæ.

IN Barcelona, A. D. 1608, Peter Claver received orders to dismiss, for the present, all thoughts of Indian missions, and to enter upon a course of divinity. He readily complied with the command; but the forlorn Africans he could not forget. For two years he devoted his undivided attention to theological studies, when, in January, 1610, the long wished-for order was issued, and Peter Claver received his commission of Missionary to Carthagenæ.

That the summons was welcome and grateful, I need not tell the reader. His joy was unbounded, and he gave vent to his feelings by running in a madness of enthusiasm from

friend to friend, to receive their congratulations upon the glorious news. He left Spain in the following month of April. The journey was long and tedious; but Claver was the cheery and ruling genius of the ship. He soon won the affection of all, — captain and crew, cabin and steerage passengers. He ministered to the sick, assisted the cook in his caboose, and lent a helping hand to the sailors. He accepted a place at table on the right of the captain, but on condition that he should be allowed to gather what delicate food he needed for the sick. He was all to all. But he expected something in return: the crew should not be profane; the passengers should not gamble; all were to attend morning and evening prayers, and service on Sunday. Did any of the crew prove recreant to orders, the officer had only to threaten that they would be reported to Brother Claver, and "old tar" gave in at once. Surely the man, who, when only an ecclesiastical

novice, but four-and-twenty years old, could gain such wonderful ascendancy over reckless, or at least, independent sea-faring men, haply thrown together, a motley crew, shall not fail to sway an undisputed control over the multitudes of despised and down-trodden slaves, who will meet with sympathy only at his hands, and he clothed with the authority of Christian priesthood.

The anchor is cast and the vessel fastened to the moorings. Peter Claver leaps ashore, and, as if the goal of his ardent desires had been reached, and he had touched the very footstool of heaven, he throws himself on his knees and fervently kisses the land he was to bedew with the sweat of his labors for the remainder of his life.

VI.

His Ordination.

YET there were drawbacks to hinder his entering upon his chosen career at once. He was not yet raised to the priesthood ; nay, he had not completed his course of theological studies, necessary to qualify him for the sacerdotal dignity. Accordingly he was ordered to Santa Fe, the ancient capital of New Grenada, a distance of two hundred leagues, whereto no marked roads led the inland traveller. It was a journey across dense forests and dismal swamps, unexplored and unfordable rivers, and rapid torrents. But Santa Fe was to afford the only opportunities to continue and finish his course of divinity. Great and keen must then have been his disap-

pointment when, on his arrival there, he found a college building indeed, but no lectures, because there were no professors. The place belonged to the Jesuit Fathers, and Peter, an honest member of their Company, devoted all his energies to the welfare of the rising institution. He installed himself at once as cook and porter, mason and blacksmith; in a word, "a Jack at all trades." It became a work of love with him: he devoted himself to perform such duties, as he averred would either give comfort to his fellows, or relieve them from disagreeable work. The child was maturing into the man. Yet this devotedness of life, in which Claver persevered for upwards of two years, proved very nigh to be a blast to the hopes of the African slave. From the constant repetition of such menial offices, which became his daily and hourly occupation, and to which he submitted with a natural and unsophisticated pliancy, — a feeling sprang up in his heart, that, after all, he

was not fit to be employed in any higher station of life. Accordingly, he urged an earnest request that he might be allowed to spend his days in the lowly condition of lay-brother. On that request was risked the moral and eternal welfare of three hundred thousand bondsmen. But Providence here interfered. Peter was ordered to resume his studies at once. He complied, and was, in proper time, recalled to Carthagená, there to be ordained priest, and definitely entrusted with the care of the Africans, continually pouring over the shores of New Grenada, in that miserable condition I have inadequately portrayed in the opening chapter of this sketch.

VII.

Mission in Carthagera.

A SPANISH Jesuit, Alonzo de Sandobal, a native of Toledo, was sent from Peru to Carthagera, in the year 1605, to aid his brethren in the meritorious work of reclaiming the Spaniards from the evil state into which they had debased themselves ; and who, never so little acquainted with the history of the Spanish conquests, ignores the former degradation of the Spanish races in South America? Sandobal was a man of burning zeal, exalted piety, and very enterprising. Many, and rapidly succeeding each other, were the apostolic excursions with which he visited the towns and hamlets of New Grenada. His heart was pained at the disorders which he witnessed

among all classes of people, but nothing grieved him so deeply as the state of utter degradation and depravity into which the imported negroes had been allowed to sink. He felt, however, that, scattered as they were over a very large and often hardly accessible territory, the majority of them grown in ignorance, superstition, and brutish ways, — the bands of honest wedlock almost unknown among them, — they were beyond all hopes of recovery. Could not some means be devised by which to stem the torrent of corruption at its very source? Was it not possible to reach those hearts before they were lost to all sense of decency? The Africans arrived at Carthage in a miserable state of mental depression, and almost of despair, true enough. Yet could they not be met at their landing with a welcome that only the Christian religion could make tell even on those savage hearts? Sandobal was cheered by a ray of hope. He gave up his excursions, and, fixing his resi-

dence in Carthagèna, undertook the new work, and made himself the *depot-master* of those black importations. Success smiled on his efforts. Thus, eight years he persevered in his labors, and within that time he welcomed, fed, clothed, instructed, and baptized *thirty thousand* slaves. In 1615, he was recalled to Peru, and Peter Claver was appointed his successor.

Bernardo Recio, an eminent Jesuit missionary, native of Leon, in Spain, landed in Carthagena, in July, A. D. 1749. He was welcomed ashore by Dennis Moralez, a Jesuit, fourscore years old, who had been at the head of the Slaves' Mission for half a century. He was pointed to Recio as one of the successors of Claver. The work of attending the imported negroes had so increased, from the humble beginning of Sandobal, that a whole squad of missionaries had to be regularly detailed for the service of the mission. Eighteen years from the latter date, an imbe-

cile Bourbon, holding the destinies of Spain and her dependencies in his hand, King Charles III., broke up the Slaves' Mission. True to the pledges of the *philosophism* of the eighteenth century, Marquis Aranda, the king's favorite minister, could allow no good work to stand when supported by members of the Company of Jesus. It was on that occasion that an officer of the crown, being asked by a Spanish gentleman on what process was such a wholesale murder perpetrated, he made reply, that he could not tell, "because," he added, "since Pilate's judgment no kindred case had ever been carried into court." And thus, one hundred and fifty-five years from its commencement, an institution most beneficent and productive of glorious results, and most admirably working, was suddenly brought to a close by the hand of a despot, and a field was shut up whereof the devoted cultivators were said to endure "a perpetual martyrdom."

VIII.

Landing of the Negroes.

PETER CLAVER was then set apart for a very arduous ordinance of the Gospel. He had for a while been associated with Sandoval in his work, that he might improve by his example, learn his tactics, and carry out his purposes. But such was the eagerness and devotedness with which he gave himself up to the work that he was soon honored with the distinguished appellation of "The Father of the Negroes," while he would sign his letters thus, —

PETER, THE SLAVE OF THE NEGROES FOREVER.

The landing of the Africans was soon transformed into a holiday of charity. No sooner

was the vessel with the precious cargo despoiled, than Claver put off in a boat well laden with cordials, fruits, tobacco, and other dainties, which he knew were much coveted by those suffering creatures. He boarded the ship with the authority of an officer. In fact, in what regarded the Africans, the military as well as the civil authorities were under his sway. Nothing was refused to "Father Claver," who never asked for himself, but whose wants in behalf of his poor negroes were never satiated. He had selected a few among the more intelligent and best-disposed negroes of Carthagena, and had formed them into an auxiliary band to help him in his work. They accompanied him aboard the slave-ship, and wonderful was the impression made on the imported slaves, when he pointed to his helpers, — whilom crushed like themselves with fear and despair. See how different now both in body and soul !

Formerly the imported African was met on

his landing by the harsh command of the unfeeling pen-master. But now the servant of God and the father of the slave takes the black man by the hand, imprints a kiss of friendship and protection on his hollow cheek, bids him be of good cheer, not to fear, there is yet much to hope in his future. He was there to protect and befriend them. He was their father. With such cheering words he accompanied his little presents to them, and with those presents and those words he seemed to give them his own heart and to demand theirs. He was wont to say, We must speak to them with our hands before we try to make them understand the promises and appeals of our lips. The sick enlisted his immediate attention. Contemporary writers relate a circumstance which may not meet with a ready belief, but is, nevertheless, worthy the consideration of a believer in God's providence,—of him who loves to trust HIM, even as a child nestling in its moth-

er's bosom. It was remarked that, after Claver had taken charge of the slaves, deaths on board ships during the passage became extremely rare, while there was a corresponding increase after the vessels had been fastened to their moorings. Might it not have been a reward bestowed by Heaven on the charity and zeal of blessed Claver? It was the good man's happiness, the earnest endeavor of his life, to make his negroes happy, and, above all, to secure for them an admittance into the Mansions of their heavenly Father. Did he not pray, as fervently as a heart brimful of love can pray, by day and by night, that the vessels might arrive in port with all on board safe? Are we not taught that God delights to be with the children of men? *O ye of little faith!*

On the day appointed for landing, the good father was there waiting for his children. What with the words spoken in his behalf by his interpreters and catechists, and the kind-

ness he had previously exhibited to them, the imported Africans seemed lost to everything else; their eyes were sharpened in search of *the Father*. No sooner was he descried than those unfortunate victims testified their feelings by clapping of hands and lively gesticulations and shouts of joy. The kindness of Claver, reported in the Guineas and Congo, had even an influence towards reconciling the unsophisticated children of Africa with their hard lot of being sold into captivity. Every one of them he helped over the plank from the gangway to the pier. The men he welcomed with a kiss.

What a sight! But what was it that prompted Peter Claver to befriend those poor Africans with such demonstrations?—to come from his native land, many thousand miles away to devote himself to the care, the regeneration, of those outcasts, covered with vermin, reeking with filth, tainted with foul and contagious diseases, trodden under the heels

of mankind — what prompted him? The sight of their SOULS MADE IN THE IMAGE AND LIKENESS OF GOD! And what else should prompt him, and all who are in the work of regenerating any class of people?

IX.

Claver in the Pens.

IN anxious foresight, Claver begged from house to house, from store to store, in the shambles, and among the fruit-venders all he could obtain for his newly-arrived children. He would imploringly say to his friends, — “A ship-load of negroes is coming into port; I must have a bait to catch them with.” It is pleasant to chronicle the fact, that his appeals were always responded to very readily by the inhabitants of New Grenada, for he did not confine himself to the city, but he extended his errands of charity to suburban and country places. Many colonists looked upon those importations as a matter of course, and seemed quite happy

that there was a man whom they were to help in alleviating the misery consequent on them. The governor of the province, usually a grandee from old Spain, was seen to accompany the Father very often, and administer to the wants of the blacks, in the wake of their priest. After landing, a liberal supply of wine and fruits was ready on hand to comfort them. Carts and wagons well littered were there to transfer the sick and the dying. When everything had been made ready and properly arranged, Peter Claver would start to convoy in orderly train, and lead the Africans to their abodes in the city. Here the results of his indefatigable charity were witnessed. While that depot was, before Claver's advent, a veritable pen, he had it transformed into a clean, comfortable, and even cheery dwelling. The instincts of an apostle transpired through all his actions. It was evident that the blessed man felt nothing so much at heart as to christianize

the blacks. To that end he referred everything else; for *he* could do no more. No doubt his heart revolted at the state of degradation to which a traffic in human flesh had sunk man's nature; yet, had he spoken freely, out of the feelings of his own heart, he would have impaired his usefulness, and the poor Africans would have lost their best and only friend.

The abode set apart for the imported bondsmen bore some resemblance to our casemates. Wide and bare they formerly were, innocent of all furniture. In them the *importations* were huddled, several hundred in one room, irrespective of sex, age, and infirmities, without even a litter of straw to lie on. It is recorded by a trustworthy witness that the stench issuing from one of those halls was so overpowering that in opening its doors he fell senseless to the floor. Yet we are taking a view of those receptacles in their normal state of good health. Imagine, then, the

small-pox sweeping in foul contagion through them! Surely you do not fancy that the owners of that chattel will remove the infected negro to a hospital or to a lazaretto. Bah! what is the worth of a man, — yet created in the image and likeness of God! — that has been bought for a few pieces of silver, or bartered away for a gallon of rum, or a pair of cow-horns? Let him lie where he is and infect the rest, — what of it? Let them all be swept away, — what of it? We have imported enough of them to secure our fortune, and we can feather our nest even more comfortably by a few more trips to Congo.

But Claver did not think so. He felt in his heart of hearts the deplorable condition of those despised wretches. The pens became his garden of pleasure. In them he spent the better part of his existence: whole days and whole weeks and whole months for forty years. As long as there remained an

inmate, he was seen every morning wending his way to the pens, — a heavy load of provisions, bread, fruits, and spirits, in two large pouches, astride his shoulders, and he weighed down and bent on his staff.

His first care was for the sick. He attended each case with the assiduousness of a physician and the affection of a mother. Incredible as the thing may appear, it is none the less a fact that oftentimes he had to disinfect, by prodigal fumigations, the atmosphere around a sick man, in order to arouse him into sensitiveness, and thus to be able to prepare him for his last journey. For this purpose he spread his clerical mantle so as to cover the couch, and under its ample folds he burnt disinfecting herbs.

X.

How Claver converted Negroes.

AN early chronicler, commenting on these great tokens of Claver's genuine charity, remarks that African slaves, standing by and in perfectly good health, actually blessed their fate, and most joyfully forgot the roaming freedom of their native hills, for the blessings of servitude on American soil! Could that writer be sincere? Perhaps so. Yet if he was, his sincerity is only the result of thoughtlessness. Because the ancient nigger, who stood guard at Dupont's artesian well in Louisville, to my question, "Why didn't he cross over to Ohio and be a free man?" replied that "He didn't care to be one of yon white trash;" and because many others

would, in the same circumstances, perhaps wisely enough give the same answer, must we take these words as the sentiment of all the colored people that bordered then on the Free States? It is not a question of what Tom or Sam may like, or are willing to be, but of *what they ought to be*.

Let us resume and enter into some details. We have seen the Africans sheltered in their dwellings, and made as comfortable as their father's charity could make them. Green boughs, fresh straw, cooling beverages, and Claver's cheery countenance, and the hearty grip of his hand made these wretches almost forget their wretchedness. As soon as they were rested and became composed, and somewhat reconciled with their new condition, — a great change that from the vessel's hold! — Claver set to work. Are those beings to live in bondage? Let them, at least, make the best of it; let them learn something whereby they can profit by their sufferings;

ay, more, let us try whether they cannot be taught some lessons that will shed happiness in their hearts. What better lesson can they learn than that this life is short and precarious and the next is eternal? The next! that which it is in our inalienable power to render one of ineffable happiness! — To work, then, with the simplest truths of Christianity. But those minds are very rude; they are stupid. Then, again, they speak different dialects; lastly, the purchaser is in a hurry; his plantation, or his mill, or his mine are sadly in want of “hands;” let them come; we’ll educate them on the plantation. “No!” says Peter, *the slave of the negro*, “No; they shall not go yet awhile!” He stands between the negro and the “soul driver;” and what Father Claver wills is law in Carthagera. Who would dare to resist *that* man of God?

Thus, then, intelligent catechists, trained by the apostle, telling representations of the principal truths of the Christian religion, Fa-

ther Claver's untiring zeal and great sanctity do the work. The unsophisticated and untutored African is at first lost in gaping admiration. Such things he had never seen before,—could not even imagine them. Then he feels drawn towards what he sees and what he hears : he loves the doctrine. He has a first but soul-stirring glimpse of a glorious country, yonder, above the sun and the moon and the stars, and *there* no slavery, no small-pox, eternal health and unspeakable happiness. It belongs to the negro as well as to the white man ; it was purchased for both by that good Saviour who is hanging on that cross. He must then do what Father Claver tells him, in order to secure possession of that country. At last he submits in reverent faith and love ; he pronounces the vivifying "I believe," and he is regenerated in the laver of Redemption. It was an almost every day's occurrence that the missionary should be carried home in the evening, totally exhausted by

the labor of catechising his children during the day. In all truth his was "a perpetual martyrdom."

Nor were his instructions of a superficial or nominal character. On the contrary, no slave was allowed to leave for the country until he had learned the Lord's prayer, the Apostle's Creed, and proper devotions for morning and evening; yet not in a parrot-like manner; for they were repeatedly called upon to explain the meaning of what they had learned by heart, until they had attained a clear understanding of the sense of their lessons. Their diligence was rewarded with suitable presents.

A thought arises here in the mind of the student of history. Had Father Claver been allowed time and opportunity to impart to those Africans a plain but substantial education, and had they been granted their freedom, would not many among them have attained a high degree of moral and temporal

welfare? Certainly they would. But why were they not allowed the boon? Here the thought halts before the throne of God's providence, humbly bows, and dares not to urge the question. . . .

An amusing scene was often witnessed at these instructions. In his eagerness to urge upon them the necessity of divesting themselves of all former idolatrous habits, and emerge from the baptismal waters thoroughly renovated, he would say : " We must do even as the serpent does ; throw off the old coil and let a new one shine ; " and he would accompany the words with a motion of his right hand as if peeling off the skin of the left ; whereupon his simple-minded hearers imitated him, and applying their finger-nails, none too short, to their bare arms, showed that they understood what he meant. Eye-witnesses say that they performed the act in all sobriety, and evidently wished their teacher should know that they understood him. Often were they

melted in tears as he expounded the grievousness, malice, and ingratitude of sin, the misery entailed upon the loss of heaven, and the punishments of hell. Captivated as they were by the kindness of his manners, and the halo of goodness overshadowing his whole person, no wonder they drank with reverence and trust every word that was uttered by his lips. At last, after many days of toil and immense patience, the joyous morn'g dawns upon them that will illumine their admission into the fold of Christianity. With a knowledge of their immortal destiny, and of the proper way to work it out, hundreds of those poor African slaves forget, in the gladness of the moment, their doom. But then the separation takes place! The scene is heart-rending. Prostrated on the ground they would take hold of their father's feet and bathe them in scalding tears. Claver's heart well-nigh broke. He raised them in his arms, but now they seemed to feel unworthy of being

pressed to his heart. Their tears and their lamentations melted hearts of the hardest temper.

And thus, when one cargo had been disposed of, he at once commenced over again the same tedious, monotonous, and repulsive work ; and then again and again, until the ten and twelve thousand slaves were thus annually prepared to live and feel as *human beings* should, supported by the hope of a blessed immortality.

XI.

Contrabands.

NOR were these all Claver's labors. Besides this work *en masse*, he had to carry on a kind of desultory warfare exceedingly harassing; for not all the imported Africans were landed at the port: captains of minor vessels would smuggle small cargoes of a score or less at different points of the coast, and thereby avoid the king's duty. When on *terra firma* those betrayed wretches were hidden in caves, cellars, vaults, and out-of-the-way places, until an opportunity to sell them should present itself. And because, from traditionary feelings, the purchasers generally preferred Christian slaves to pagans,

the remorseless trader would testify to their having been baptized, albeit there was not the slightest foundation for the assertion. We may well imagine how harrowing such information must have been to Claver's heart,—he, who would willingly have allowed himself to be torn in pieces, rather than allow one single soul to appear before God unregenerated ! To ferret out these contrabands, he had trained a faithful band of well-instructed Africans. They were skilful even to cunning ; for it was not very easy to worm the secret out of those abettors of iniquity. Once brought in contact with the hidden negro, the catechist would address him with some general remarks on the necessity of religion, if one wishes to go up to heaven, and would acquaint him with the wonderful doings of one Peter Claver, a great friend of God and of the Africans, who was ready to return their confidence with the most tender care. Those unfortunate wretches, unaccustomed to kind

words, became at once anxious to see the friend of the poor African. Nor was Claver less eager to meet them; the more so because once acquainted with their being ashore — although he seemingly ignored how they had come there — the dishonest traders were at his mercy, and to secure his silence would allow the missionary to dispose of their *merchandise* as he chose.

Harassing and arduous was the work. For it subjected the weak and fairly worn-out priest to go the rounds of hundreds of places, and, often, only in the night-time. To the ordinary average of a thousand Africans to be taken care of at a time, during the summer months he added the oppressive labor of seeking for those stragglers.

Occasionally it happened that the imported slaves were detained at the pens even beyond the usual time, and good Claver improved the opportunity. He visited them daily, and by private conversation and public exhortations

endeavored to confirm them in their good resolutions, and give them still clearer conceptions of the truths they had embraced. He was anxious that they should punctually attend service at the church on Sundays; whereupon certain Spanish ladies loudly complained of the foul odor issuing from the African's skin. But Father Peter informed them that the negroes had souls to provide for as well as the whites, and their ladyships might one day be very glad to obtain a seat by the side of an African in the mansions of the Father; and no more was said about the matter.

It was his practice, when a certain number of the negroes were sold into one district, to divide them into squads, and to appoint the most intelligent and best instructed among them to watch over the rest, and make them repeat catechism and prayers at stated times.

No prayer he inculcated upon them to repeat so frequently as a sincere Act of Contrition. Thereby he kept a wholesome fear of

God — *the beginning of wisdom* — alive in their hearts, and, should they fail in the observance of his law, they had ready at hand the balm of repentance and pardon, whereby to heal their bleeding souls.

XII.

Catechists.

FATHER CLAVER felt very embarrassed for the want of interpreters. True he had learned the Angola language, — the most spoken in those countries whence the slaves were exported, — yet many were the dialects. His only resource was to borrow the services of other slaves who spoke the same tongue, had been some years in America, and had proved faithful and true to their profession of Christianity. He employed them as interpreters. But it was difficult to procure them, and masters were unwilling to lose their services, perhaps when needed the most. To meet this last difficulty I find it recorded that the resources accruing from the alms he had collected “ena-

bled him to get interpreters to ransom some slaves that had fallen into despair, and even to pay substitutes to work in the place of his interpreters as long as he employed them."

However, in order to place the work of interpreters on a sure and independent basis, Peter Claver sought leave from his superiors to buy a certain number of Africans (innocence of the times!) from the principal districts of exportation. They were to be kept at the Jesuit College, where Claver himself resided. They should not be held *in strict bondage*, but qualified and privileged as a body of interpreters and catechists, for which duties he would train them. Accordingly, he begged from his friends sufficient money to buy, at least for a beginning, three of the most capable young men that could be obtained on the African coast. Charging a merchant with the business, "*Take,*" said he, "*this gold, a token of your safe arrival and speedy return.*"

Remember that this sum is given in trust to you to secure the immortal hopes of thousands of souls." Good man! Did it ever enter his mind that he was buying human flesh? Never. He accepted facts as they existed, and out of their own nature he endeavored to correct the evils descending therefrom. Yet we may well say that this was the only defensible traffic of the kind ever mentioned in the history of the African trade. Heaven seemed to sanction Claver's honest and charitable undertaking; for, when in sight of the Guinea coast, a violent storm arose, and in its fury dashed the trading vessel against the rocks and broke it into pieces. The merchant, jealous of his trust, fastens the gold in a belt around his waist and plunges into the water to swim ashore. But the land is far, and his strength fails him, when an empty and huge shell of a sea-tortoise floats towards him, and by such frail but providential aid keeping afloat, after a few hours of buffeting the

waves he reaches the land. The three slaves are bought and become very efficient co-laborers in the apostle's work. The merchant, says the chronicle, who had so faithfully discharged his duty to Father Claver, met afterwards with great success, and increased his wealth to tenfold what it was before his perilous sail in the empty shell.

The three imported catechists were assigned to different duties in the college. Thus they were made to feel an interest in its welfare; and, having been taught such crafts as they seemed most adapted for, they were employed in them, when not engaged in teaching their imported countrymen. Their earnings were thrown into the catechists' fund, and, after providing for their wants and comfort, the balance was devoted to additional purchases, thus made without appealing to public charity. Thereby the number of the catechists was increased, and their efficiency enhanced. Claver looked upon them as his best friends,

and tenderly watched over their comfort and happiness. In case of sickness he took their care upon himself, and on one occasion he was known to resign his own bed to one of them who was suffering from an incurable and horrible pustule. On the death of any of them, he could not be consoled, and spared no pains nor expense to have the most solemn funeral rites performed over the remains, — so much he valued their services ! so much he had at heart that people should know how highly he honored those men who assisted him in his favorite work in behalf of the Africans !

Yet we must not think that these cherished and favored friends were always alive to the importance of their trust, or even sensible of the honor and privileges bestowed on them. On the contrary, we are informed that some among them requited Claver with barbarous and heartless ingratitude. Owing, perhaps, to the instincts of savageness which could not be entirely rooted out of their breasts, some

grew so conceited as even to pretend to dictate to him and overrule his commands. Hence their manners, rude, violent, unbearable. But he never uttered the least word of resentment. A rebellious and insolent behavior on the part of one of his catechists would only insure an increased kindness and deeper trust on his part. Such is the revenge of saints! Yet another timely and practical lesson we may learn at this stage of our history, to wit: sudden elevations and injudiciously bestowed privileges will turn many a head and prove the ruin of many a weak mind.

XIII.

Claver and the City Negroes.

THE city of Carthagera swarmed with a crowd of slaves, — hired servants in private families. Of them, blessed Claver took a most especial care. He seemed to know them individually, and addressed them by their Christian names. Are they loitering in the streets, wasting their time, or indulging in useless gossip; his appearance, even at a distance, will send them home running as if for their lives. Once a woman of dubious character was conversing with a young man, perhaps on topics of questionable propriety. Some one passing by let the words "Father Claver" drop as he went. No sooner was that name uttered than the parties took to their heels, frightened

out of their wits. All charity and patience with them in their sickness, wants, or distress, he knew their character and propensities too well to allow the least compromise between virtue and vice. Thus, knowing their fond and national love for dances, he would not forbid them. The bow that is always bent will soon break. Better for them to enjoy an honest recreation with their Father's approval and God's blessing, than to indulge in it by stealth, and with a treacherous conscience. Yet, to keep them within the bonds of salutary fear, he would suddenly appear among them just when the least expected. But, as it sometimes happened that things were not conducted after those principles of strict decorum he had been so strenuous in inculcating on them, he would flourish his cane right and left, and send them scampering home; which behavior of the sainted man was afterwards turned into a serious objection against his being *canonized*.

The objection is removed in sensible and eloquent words by Pope Benedict XIV.*

* BENEDICT XIV, after mentioning that exception had been taken against the goodness of Peter Claver, on account of some harshness of manner, thus makes away with the difficulty:—

“There can be no doubt that the venerable servant of God acted in a praiseworthy manner. He left no stone unturned in order to deter the newly converted Moors from joining, after the fashion of their country, in improper dances. He justly feared, lest, as it had happened, they should *return to their vomit*, or engage in games of chance, which always ended in much swearing, and great profanity of language. It is alleged, then, that he sometimes seemed carried away by too much zeal, and to overstep the bounds of a missionary. Indeed, he would disband those forbidden assemblies, and strike the offenders with a lash,—commonly called *discipline*,—and even with blows from a key he may have happened to carry with him. But if we take into careful consideration the obstinate disposition of the Moors, and the savageness of their nature; the contempt exhibited towards his previous warnings; his great suavity of manners, proven by so many testimonies; all those acts of beautiful charity and benevolence towards the Africans, who looked upon him as their father and benefactor; lastly, the well-known fact that from such blows no asperity of feelings was ever engendered against him,—indeed, no cause for condemnation will be found,—nothing in opposition to the virtue of meekness,—nothing that will clash with the profession of a missionary. The Apostle Paul directed the Galatians to *instruct in the spirit of meekness* (vi. 1); but wrote to the Corinthians, *Shall I come to you with a rod, or in charity and in the spirit of meekness?* (I. iv. 21.) And then again to Titus, *Rebuke them sharply*. (i. 13.) Thereby he wishes us to understand, that, according to the

One practice, however, he could not destroy by his own exertions. We allude to the *Tears of Death*, a nocturnal ceremony, surreptitiously introduced, it seems, by Mohammedan slaves. Assembling together to celebrate the memory of the departed, they ended in drunkenness and turpitude. At last he called the secular authorities to his aid, and such gatherings were forbidden by law, under severe penalties.

Should he hear a Christian slave using profane or blasphemous words, he would order him to lie on the ground, and, putting

difference of persons and sinners, we should at times employ severe correction, and even the rod; but in other circumstances act with great meekness. With the Galatians he deemed proper to deal with tenderness, and in a spirit of mildness; but reprimands and the rod should be applied to the Corinthians and to the Cretians. For, the Galatians, sinners though they had been, had acknowledged their infirmities, and given themselves up to the physician to be cured; whereas, the Corinthians were not willing, after their fall, to acknowledge their error, and would not submit to their elders, and accept the merited punishment, and *the Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, slothful bellies* (Tit. i. 12).” — *Decret. Ben. XIV., in Causa &c., die 24, Sept. 1747.*

his foot gently on his neck, "*Who art thou,*" he would cry, "*who darest to thrust thy tongue into heaven, and blaspheme his Divine Majesty?*"

One of the greatest evils he had to combat was the unwillingness on the part of masters to have their slaves tied by the bonds of matrimony. Those who are never so little acquainted with *the peculiar institution* will readily imagine the evil consequences of this unnatural interference. The masters alleged that, were they to allow the slaves to marry, the latter would not improve their morals, and the former would not be served any better. Whereupon Peter Claver rejoined, that, if, after their marriage, the slaves should persist in their evil ways, they alone would be responsible; whilst, for the immorality arising from their marriages being prevented, the master would be accountable before God and man. But when owners of slaves were not accessible to reason, he used that author-

ity, which a great sanctity of life, and consciousness of right, warranted him to assume, and, laying aside all human consideration, he married the Africans to the women of their choice, — but with such safeguards, sanctioned by law, as would prevent those scandals, on the part of brutal masters, which we have so often lamented among the former slaves of our own States.

In a word, Peter Claver was *the* father of that immense family of imported blacks. As a father, he was anxious for their welfare, and, with a father's tenderness, he provided for them. Many thousand Africans were domiciled in Carthagena; and Claver looked upon himself as exclusively *set apart* for them. He truly averred to the last, by every pulsation of his heart, and action of his life, that he was the sworn

SLAVE OF THE NEGROES, FOREVER!

Not to interfere with the requisitions of employers, he devoted Sundays and holidays

exclusively to the service of his beloved negroes. From twelve of the clock at night until twelve of the clock at noon, he sat in the confessional, to listen to their spiritual and temporal wants, and impart words of consolation, and give salutary advice. Twelve hours! and those long hours, face to face, close to those bodies, whose breath was so offensive, and from whose skins emanated such disagreeable odors! Besides this extraordinary work in their behalf, he devoted every evening, and many hours every morning, before the time assigned to begin their tasks, to their particular service. Sometimes ladies and gentlemen of high rank presented themselves, and requested Father Claver to hear them, while he was densely surrounded by his negroes. But he would invariably, and with much kindness, reply, "*No, no; I am the confessor of the negro; for persons of your quality there are others ready to listen to your wants.*" Yet he could

not refuse them ; and surely it was an edifying sight to see the haughty Castilian lady and the Catalonian chevalier, meekly and devoutly waiting for their turn, after their servants had been consoled and comforted by the unselfish, earnest, and devoted Apostle of Carthagera.

XIV.

Claver in Church.

HOWEVER hard these labors of Peter Claver may have appeared to us, they become almost insignificant in comparison with what he undertook during the hallowed season of Lent. His work began with the Sunday of *Quinquagesima*, immediately preceding the first day of Lent, *Ash Wednesday*. The regularity observed for the first two or three years had established the fact that Father Peter would be punctually found at his post, invariably, from that day to Easter Sunday, eight hours in the morning, four in the afternoon, and three in the evening, for the benefit of the negroes. Fifteen hours!—in a damp church, under a torrid sky, crowded

to excess by anxious penitents, men, women, and children, many of them unwashed and unkempt, or laboring under painful and offensive diseases. Fifteen hours every day ! And let us not think that he passed lightly from one to another. On the contrary, he took great pains with each ; questioned them patiently, so as to form an accurate opinion of their consciences ; entered into the minutest details, endeavoring to set them right, and to start them anew. Fifteen hours thus spent every day, for fifty days, in a work, every feature whereof was repulsive and shorn of bodily or mental charm ! It is no wonder, then, that he should often be carried to his bed, on the shoulders of his friends, all but lifeless. The foul air, the excessive heat, the swarms of flies and mosquitoes biting and worrying him most unmercifully, the languor consequent upon profuse perspiration, the tediousness of the work, — all combined to excite a nervousness which at length

conquered a weak constitution, which had so far withstood all only by dint of an unconquerable will. Yet, no sooner was he restored to consciousness than he returned to his post. Nor did these harassing and comparatively obscure labors impair his cheerfulness, or damp his spirits. He was the very impersonation of happiness. Many a person that watched him, while at work, was highly edified at the elasticity of his manners, — happiness dancing in his eye, and joy in all his movements. The very glance with which he surveyed the crowd around him, the look of encouraging welcome, bespoke a happy soul. Nothing could ever trouble him but the knowledge that virtue had been outraged, and God offended. When his work of charity and reconciliation was over for the day, he mingled with his brethren at the college, with a heavenly joy beaming on his countenance, while words seemed to fail him how to express the exultation with which *his soul*

magnified the Lord. Verily, he must have felt happy, having been the instrument of bringing so many souls back to the path of virtue. Moreover, it must have given him ineffable pleasure to be the depository of so many acts of heroic perfection achieved by those poor negroes, who, faithfully responding to his fatherly care, steadily advanced in the ways of righteousness; and in whose minds the uppermost care was to secure for their souls an immortality of bliss.

During one of those Lenten times an occurrence took place which imperilled Father Claver's life. Three evenings were set apart for instruction to such male negroes as had acquired a good knowledge of Spanish. The sermons were delivered by one of the fathers attached to the college. Once, as the preacher was at the best point of his sermon, and the audience were melting in tears, under the emotion caused by his impassioned eloquence, all of a sudden a storm arose, a fu-

rious wind shook the church from its foundation, and thunder-peals and lightning-flashes came upon them in terrible and quick succession. The effect was terrific. The worthy padre ran from the pulpit into the vestry, and a portion of the affrighted audience rushed, with yells and cries of despair, through the sanctuary to a door in the rear, where they became so jammed that the opening was blocked, until the onward pressure forced them through, and, in less time than I can relate it, flung the whole mass down the steps, and precipitated them, like an avalanche, over the body of Father Claver, who was kneeling in prayer on the landing. Those who came in contact with him cried lustily, Father Peter ! Father Peter ! The name was caught by the rest, and the fact that he was there, together with an indistinct apprehension that he was hurt, worked like a charm. Quickly extricating their limbs, they were on their feet unhurt ; and, indeed, it takes more than a

jam or a fall to hurt a genuine African Moor. Claver was picked up all bruised and in great pain. But not minding his own trouble, "*Come, children,*" said he, "*let us back to the church and finish our devotions.*" Whereupon all went back, perfectly reassured. The sermon was resumed, the usual exercises performed, and the people remarked that "Father Peter had got the best of the devil, that time ! "

XV.

Claver in the Country.

LENT and its work over, Claver had a few weeks to depend on before the annual tide of imported negroes set in. That period he devoted to visiting his beloved slaves in places round about Carthagera. Somewhat as in our Southern States they were scattered over plantations; the "gangs" working under an overseer or "taskmaster." Peter's arrival was hailed like one's who was sent by the Lord. His labors were hard beyond description. In the first place, he had to travel great distances and over roads hardly worthy the name; then, on arriving at a mine or plantation, he would not take up his abode with the master, but chose for himself the most

dilapidated of the negroes' huts. Besides a wish to identify himself with his flock and make them feel that he was one of them, was he not *Peter, the slave of the negroes forever?* To prevent complaints on the part of masters and overseers, he devoted to the service of the field hands the evenings and early hours in the morning. The day was reserved for the sick, his private devotions, some rest, and what spiritual benefit he could bestow on the whites. The happy results of these missionary excursions were concubinary connections exchanged for the sacredness of matrimony, enemies reconciled, souls brought back to God after years of estrangement, baptisms administered, ill-gotten goods returned, religious practices established,—in a word, a thorough change from evil to good and from good to the very best he could expect of them.

It is related that in one of those excursions he tried in vain to bring an unfortunate negro to a sense of his duty to God. The

African remained unmoved against the holy man's entreaties. "*Beware!*" said Claver, at last, his finger raised in menacing gesture, and turned away. Within a few days the wretch was devoured by a cayman. Once he met a slave with a bundle of maize in his arms. "Brother," said Claver, "you will not live to eat of that." The man was in the bloom of youth, and of athletic strength. Within a few days he fell sick. To those who encouraged him not to fear, he was so young and so strong, "*I know better,*" he replied, "*Father Peter spoke to some purpose: I want to see him.*" Claver came, prepared him, and, in a few hours, the athletic youth was a corpse! Do not these facts remind us of those prophetic and ominous words, "*Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left*"? It is Luke who reports them, in the seventeenth chapter of his gospel, and verily they are suggestive. On another occasion, Claver left the high road

all of a sudden, and plunged into the forest. To his companion, who evidently did not relish the rough walk, and asked why that sudden turn, he made answer, "The salvation of souls." In fact, not far in the woods, they found three forlorn and very old Africans lying in a cave, who seemed to wait only for his bidding, before they could enter upon their long and last journey. Claver and his companion administered to their bodily wants the best they could, and then prepared them to meet the Lord, before whom they were summoned, while the priests were still with them.

A very intimate friend of the writer, a priest, was, some sixteen years ago, stationed in an inland town in Maryland. One morning, as he left his house for the usual round of visits among his parishioners, he chanced to pass by the livery-stable where he kept his horse. Without the least preconceived idea, a sudden thought struck him to go to see

Mr. O——, fifteen miles from his parochial residence. He avers to this day that he ordered his horse to be saddled, returned home, then left for the country so mechanically that when he was about one mile from home, he actually wondered at his almost bootless determination, and was about turning back, but for an indescribable feeling by which he was goaded on. But great was his surprise, when, about within two miles of his friend's house, he met a horseman at full speed, who, suddenly halting, informed him that he had been sent with a message for him to hurry to the bedside of old Aunt Molly, an ancient mulatto, a professed infidel, who was dying in utmost tortures of mind, and most anxious to see him. The reverend gentleman hastens to the house of the freed-woman, which stood within a few hundred yards, alights, spends a long hour by her couch, clears her doubts, encourages her to believe and to hope, imparts tranquillity to her soul,

baptizes her, and leaves her most happily disposed and well prepared to die. He leaves with a promise that he would call on his way home, and canters away to his friend's; but he had scarcely dismounted, when the same horseman he had met before rode up and informed the company that Aunt Molly was dead. "*There,*" said the priest, "*now I understand it all!*"

XVI.

Claver and the Sick.

THE care which Claver took of the sick was the occasion of many edifying incidents. He kept an accurate list of all who were ailing, and had secured a pledge from the masters that they would faithfully inform him whenever any of their slaves were taken ill. We are wont to bestow praises on the hardy leader of armies, should he have ridden his chargers to death under the fatigue of a long and hard-fought battle. Claver did not break down horses, because he always travelled on foot. But many a companion, who went with him on his errands of charity, broke down, utterly helpless. Young and robust as they were, they could not cope with

the elasticity and power of endurance of that great apostle. Distances, mountainous roads, inclemency of weather, and difficulties most appalling, never entered the calculations of his charity whenever there was a sick negro to look after. We might say, without the least exaggeration, that the sick in Carthagená and its environs constituted one large infirmary, and Peter Claver was its chief infirmarian, visiting physician, nurse, chaplain, and consoling angel. No matter how long the sickness lasted, his charity never grew faint. Ten years he took care of an old negress abandoned by every one else. Not once did he fail to visit, at a stated day of every week, for fourteen years, an old slave, bedridden, who lived in a hut alone, on the outskirts of Carthagená. The burden of his visits was to sweep and clean the room, set the bed and everything in order, and leave ample provisions of necessaries and delicacies to last for a week, besides the spiritual aid

and comfort he afforded the poor man. Moreover, he had engaged some charitable neighbors to watch over him.

A visit from Father Peter was looked to as from an angel. A babe does not dance with a merrier thrill at the sight of its mother when it awakes from sleep.

He always kept on hand a bountiful supply of preserves, jams, perfumes, wines, and medicines of various kinds. He had applied himself earnestly and conscientiously to the study of the healing art, so as to be able to prescribe and administer proper remedies. It was a touching sight to see that good Samaritan, even when old and infirm, tottering under the weight of satchels laid astride his shoulders, and carrying medicines, consolation, and relief to the sick, even at great distance in the country. Indeed, it was the charity of God that pressed him.

An extraordinary occurrence took place in reference to one Ursula de Abilar, a help-

less cripple, covered with ulcers, whom he had given in charge to a charitable woman, one Angela Rodriguez, in whose house the invalid was tenderly cared for. For the space of four years the blessed man visited her regularly every week. One day the afflicted woman underwent a sudden change for the worse, and Father Claver was sent for in great haste. "Be not in such a hurry ; four days yet," he replied to the messenger, and did not go to the house wherein the sick lay, until the fourth day ; he then gave Ursula all the comfort in his power and strengthened her spirit with all the rites of the Church. As he uttered those words, "*Depart, O Christian soul, out of this world,*" Ursula's spirit winged its flight for another and better world.

On another occasion he had just returned home at night, after a long, weary day spent in visiting the sick, when he drew a deep sigh, and, turning to his companion, said, "*Quick, we must go to Mr.—.*" As he entered

his friend's house he was welcomed with open arms, and with the words, "What good angel has brought you here in our distress?" But he who himself was the angel heeded not the greeting, and quickly asked, "*Where is the sick ?*" He was shown to the quarters of an aged negress, who lay in the throes of death. He consoled and shrove her; and did not leave her bedside until he had accompanied her last sigh with a fervent prayer before God's presence. Then again another day he was running in desperate hurry under a hurricane and over a desert land, where there was no way indeed, but a flood of water. The companion, hardly able to keep up with him, remarked with a smile, "*A great haul, eh?*" "*Yes, indeed,*" replied he, "*a big fish!*" The big fish proved to be a centenarian negro, covered with sores, hardly breathing, and, to all intents and purposes, waiting for the man of God, before he would start for eternity. But anecdotes of this kind are so many, that a book of

more than ordinary size might be filled with them.

We are wary about miracles ; but whilst we should forswear the very attributes of God were we to assert that their existence had ceased with the apostolic times, we cannot but admit their possibility in our own days. God has determined the laws of nature, and he can suspend or change them as he pleases.

But what we hold most steadfastly on is the efficacy of prayer. Were we not deeply and practically imbued with the conviction of its efficacy, the last Fast Day, June 1st, 1865, a day of prayer and humiliation, would have been a mockery, a horrible insult to God, and a degradation of the human mind. On that day fervent Christians, honest believers in God's providence, prayed with sincere and trusting hearts ; and God "has heard our prayers, and brought us out of the pit of misery." We all firmly and lovingly believe all this, and from this belief

we draw the sweetest and most comforting balm in life. Accordingly, I do firmly believe that Peter Claver, a blessed man, whose life must have been so acceptable to God, obtained great favors by his prayers, so sincere, so trusting, so affectionate, poured from his heart, in behalf of his forlorn Africans, and God heard him and granted his petitions even through means out of the ordinary way.

Of many occurrences, which to some might appear wonderful, but are, in fact, explained by the simple principles of Christianity, I choose the following: Called once to see a woman in labor, whose case was given up as hopeless, he found the family deeply distressed, weeping and lamenting over the sufferer for the dreaded loss of a bondwoman who had been a faithful and good servant for a great many years. At the sight, Claver exclaimed, even as his Master had done on a similar occasion, "Away with all this! what are you about? Much

good will your noise do the poor woman ! Down on your knees and pray earnestly until the woman has got over her difficulty." He did not enter the room where the sick lay, but went his way. Of course they obeyed and began their hopeful entreaties with God. Within a short hour she was, contrary to the physician's expectations, delivered ; and in course of time entirely recovered.

It is not my purpose to write the life of a saint *in extenso*. I have only wished to lay before those of my countrymen who feel so keenly the interest of a redeemed race in our own land, and have nobly devoted their energy and their lives to the regeneration of the colored people, an example to follow and a pattern to copy. Peter Claver, laboring under difficulties that would have appalled any heart less stout than his, offers a noble picture, to be kept before the mind of those who have taken in hand the difficult task of leading out of bondage a generation of

millions created in the image and likeness of God. But how did Claver go to work? With a thorough sacrifice of *self*, in perfect honesty, without the least selfish motive, aiming at naught but the development of those traits which reflect in all its godlike beauty that Image stamped upon the soul of every freed-man. "The light of thy countenance, O Lord, is marked upon *them*!" Trust in God, singleness of purpose, unflinching devotedness, — such are the weapons with which to gain a glorious victory. So mote it be!

XVII.

Claver's Fortitude.

I DO not flatter myself that I have done justice to my subject. I have only given the outlines of a great character. Confined as I have myself within a certain boundary, it only remains for me to add a few incidents which may help to place Claver's character in bolder relief, and then relate the closing scene of his career.

It might be truly said of Peter Claver as of Abraham of old, "He walked before the Lord." Every flower and every tree, the insect and the bird, the domestic pet and the wild beast, the prosperity of man or his misfortunes, — all reminded him of the Lord. He was often observed to walk in a kind of ec-

stasy, winding his way through the forests, the gigantic oak and the tall pine leading all his thoughts heavenwards. The violent storms and hurricanes which often desolate New Grenada, and seem the forewarners of the world's end, raised Claver's heart to an intense admiration of the power of God; above the clashing element of convulsed nature his spirit soared calm and enchanted to adore God at the footstool of his throne. Hence it became almost a second nature in him to be in continual intercourse with the Divine Majesty, with whom he communed in all his wants and doubts, anxieties and trials.

No wonder, then, that a man, who lived so totally for God, should love his neighbors and feel their troubles and anxieties as if they were his own. We need no proof of this after what has been written in the preceding pages. But how great that love must have been, when we are told that for several months he gave up his own bed to one of the

negro catechists, who was also a kind of attendant upon him, and who was covered with festering pustules ! Admirable act of charity,* indeed, but such an one as will be more wondered at than followed in imitation ! Yet his ardent brotherly love will remain forever a brilliant and encouraging example to ministers of the gospel. He teaches that neither heat nor cold, the late hour of night nor the earliest in the morning, furious winds nor deluging rains, dangerous roads nor other difficulties, no matter how great, should ever be in the way of performing one's duty, in behalf of our fellow-men. Nor is this to be applied exclusively to those who have been "set apart unto the gospel of Christ." Examples are these setting forth the stringent obligations binding all who either from profession of life or temporary choice are employed in duties of benevolence.

* *Admirandus potius quam imitandus*, as Claver's wonderful deeds of charity are qualified in the Testimony of his life entered in the depositions taken before the Papal Courts.

The likeness annexed to this sketch portrays the attitude of that blessed man in the performance of an act of charity. And let not the reader think that is a fancy portrait; for, to choose one out of a hundred instances, "In the house of Don Francesco Nunez de Quero, Knight of Calatrava, lay a negro, so covered with ulcers, from the sole of the foot unto the top of the head, that a putrid matter oozed out of them and trickled down to the floor.* All had fled from the horrid and sickening sight. No cheer, no help, for the forlorn wretch. Claver hears of the case and at once hurries to the rescue. No sooner did he see the afflicted man than his bowels of charity were moved. He embraced him affectionately and

* "It was he who ministered to the most loathsome diseases and even kissed the hideous wounds which they had traced in bodies half devoured by scrofula or gangrene."† — *T. W. Marshall, Christian Missions*, Vol. II. ch. ix. — *Carthagera and the blessed Peter Claver*. New York: Sadlier, 1864.

† "Malattia ordinaria è una certa specie di lebbra, che loro impiaga orribilmente la bocca e le gengive; inde si spande a comprendere tutte le membra e farne una sola piaga putrida e verminosa." — *Compendio della vita del ven. Pietro Claver*, p. 36.

thus held him for several minutes, cheek to cheek, perfectly heedless of the vermin falling from the African's nostrils over his shoulders and breast. He then lifted him out of that couch of putrefaction, washed his body, procured a new bed, thoroughly fumigated the atmosphere, and, having comforted him with proper food and invigorating cordials, by his ministering cares restored him in due time to perfect health!" Thus a contemporary chronicler. But no more of a subject, whereof our fastidious charity will not bear the details; yet *that* photograph is a true likeness.

Perhaps, in all these acts, there may be, besides a great self-denial, the allurements of heroism, whereas naught but sheer hidden suffering, without sympathy, is that occasioned by the misconception of our intentions. "Peter," said once to him his venerable friend of Majorca, "Peter, you will have a great many troubles; you shall be sorely tried; but never

fear; yours will be a just cause; and after many battles the victory will be surely yours. The enemy of all that is good will sharpen many tongues against you; but what of it? Either you have given cause to their animadversions, through some fault of yours, and if so, without further ado, beg God's pardon, and endeavor to correct it at once; or it is no fault of yours, and then bless God in the fulness of thy heart, and rejoice because thou art deemed worthy to endure a little for God's sake." Which words sank deep in Peter's heart, and gallantly did he endure the severest and most heartless treatment at the hand of masters who were jealous of his influence over their slaves.* What more? His own people, his co-laborers in the vineyard, the fathers of the college, at times misunderstood his motives, disapproved his

* A parallel and very striking illustration of the conduct and feelings of such masters will be found in the history of the imprisonment and death of that honest missionary of Demarara, John Smith. See H. Martineau's *History of the Peace*, Vol. II. p. 387. Boston: Walker, Wise, & Co. 1865

ways, thwarted his plans, arrested his operations, and occasioned him severe trials and vexations. Lastly, those whom he had humbled with his dauntless reprimands for their lecherous lives, or whose villanous and scandalous liaisons he had sundered, revenged themselves by opprobrious invectives and slanders, or punished him with blows and even threatened his life. A woman of noble parentage, whom he had greatly displeased by withdrawing a married man from her intimacy, feigned sickness and sent for Father Claver. He at once complied, and went to her apartment, accompanied by his companion, a member of the order, whom he never allowed to be out of sight whenever he visited persons of the other sex. As he entered, two ruffians fell upon him, ready to despatch him at the beckoning of their mistress. On no occasion was Claver known to have ever shown the least sign of fear. At this strait he betrayed neither discomposure nor the least

surprise, but simply remarked, "Well, if it be God's will that I should die now, I am ready!" which words, uttered with his eyes turned heavenward, and in perfect resignation, transfixed with alarm, shame, and sorrow both the woman and her hirelings. They became overpowered by a sudden consciousness of their guilt, and on their knees ardently besought him to reconcile them with God

XVIII.

Death.

OUR blessed Peter has attained the ripe age of sixty-five. The year of grace, 1650, was one of revival with the Catholics all over the world, — one of those seasons which are a blessing to them. Pope Innocent X. had proclaimed a Jubilee *toto orbe Catholico*. By pressing apostolic letters, he exhorted his spiritual children to enter upon an honest and earnest examination of their lives, to propitiate the Father of mercies with prayer, and fasting, and alms-deeds, to be renewed in spirit and action, so that with a cheerful spirit and a hopeful heart they might start anew in the path of Christian virtue, thoroughly reconciled with God and

with their neighbors. For this purpose he opened the spiritual treasures of the Church, and, with great solicitude, admonished all not to allow this time of acceptance to pass unheeded, but, uniting in spirit all over the world, with one heart, humbly address the Throne of Mercy, and secure pardon for the past, and grace for the future.

In that same year the plague ravaged Carthagená. It was a busy time with the clergy, but none among them worked as Claver did. In town and in the country, by day and by night, never sitting at a meal, snatching an hour of sleep wherever his strength failed him, never in bed, always on the bare ground, he doubled his labors,—as if the labors he had gone through for the last five and thirty years had not overtaxed his energy. The season was one of almost unbearable heat, and the scourge had already smitten some of the strongest among the clergy; even two fathers of the College had

fallen a prey to it. Peter himself had swooned several times, and for hours had remained insensible. His superiors became alarmed, and he was ordered home to rest. At first sight, he was given up as past all hopes of recovery. In that state of total prostration, he was attacked by the plague, and his life despaired of. The announcement caused unutterable joy to his heart. Yet he rallied, but his constitution was broken. The fever had done its work. "Acute pains in the bowels; total prostration; a continual shivering and shaking in all his limbs, so that he had not the use of hands and feet, and his teeth kept chattering all the time." Such, writes an eye-witness, were the effects of that terrible disease on a body already shattered by too much straining and overwork. Thus he lay four long years! He became bedridden; the spinal cord had lost its vitality, and he was not able to feed himself; and withal, worn

witnesses and infirmarians attest that he was never known to utter a lament; he never asked for comfort or relief.

But how are we to explain the total dereliction in which he was left? None visited him. Even the inmates of the college, with the exception of the infirmarian and his attendant, seemed to have forgotten him! And he had spent five and thirty years in doing good to all, white and black, rich and poor, sick and well! True, the pestilence raged in Carthage for two years; true, also, one-half of the inmates of the college had fallen victims of charity in attending the sick; many were lingering in long sickness, the remainder were overwhelmed with work. Yet the father of all should have been taken better care of!

He was left in charge of a Moor, a vicious brute, half-civilized, — perhaps none else could be obtained, — whimsical, unreasonable, unfeeling; a wretch whom the patience

and meekness of the good priest only encouraged to do his worst. This *nurse* carried him his meals at stated hours, but he eat beforehand the best of the sick man's food. He had to feed him, but he used no other implements but his fingers reeking with filth. Some days he gave him no bread, and others no drink at all. And, through those weary years, Claver was "dumb as a lamb before his shearer, and he opened not his mouth."

Whenever the poor old man wished to be dressed, and be carried to the church, that villain of a nurse either refused him, or hid himself; and if prevailed on to do his duty, he raved, shook and pushed the invalid, and treated him in a barbarous manner. Poor Claver strove sometimes to put on his clothes by himself, but his strength failing him, he would fall heavily on the floor, alarming those who might chance in the room below, and causing them to run to his assistance. But he, with a smile, only requested that his

nurse — forsooth, so benevolent and kind-hearted ! — should be sent for.

Notwithstanding these intense sufferings, he devoted what time he could to the service of the people, and, before all, of his dear blacks. Very often he caused himself to be carried to the church, of a morning, and remained there as long as the pain, which racked his head, allowed him to listen to their spiritual wants, and afford them advice and consolation. He entreated the porter, as a most especial favor, that he would bring to his room any man who should request the attendance of any of the fathers. And because some one remonstrated that he had worked enough in his day, and he should now rest, he meekly replied, "*Ah, brother, what have I done so far? Pray let me make up for so much lost time!*"

Meanwhile, a cargo of Ararai, one of the most savage tribes of Africa, of whom none had been imported for thirty years, were landed in Carthagena. The saintly and apos-

tolie old man gave his superiors no peace until they allowed him to be carried to the "quarters." It was noticed that, savage and rebellious as they had proved themselves on board ship, and after landing, the sight of Father Claver, of whom, however, they had never heard, at once subdued and tamed them. He called them to himself, affectionately pressed them to his bosom, and divided amongst them what refreshments and presents he had been able to gather in times so difficult, and under so unfavorable circumstances. Through his exertion, some interpreters were found; and for their use, unable as he was to work any more, he dictated rules of instruction and a catechism, especially adapted to those obtuse minds and rebellious souls. Lastly, having secured the assistance of a zealous clergyman to carry on his work, he went back to the solitude of his cell.

Nothing relieves the monotony of a lingering sickness, or will cheer the sick so much,

as tidings of absent friends, or recollections of early life. We may then believe that great, indeed, must have been the gladness of Claver's heart, when, one day, a friend of his bounded into his room, and laid on his bed the Life and Portrait of Alonzo Rodriguez, his old friend of fifty years ago. Poor Claver! Choked with emotion, he could not utter a "Thank you," but first he laid the book on his head, then he wept for joy, then pressed the book again to his heart, and then kissed it. "Thank God," cried he at last, "that I have been spared so long!" From that day the feelings of his innocent and warm heart seemed to have found a new vent; the days of his youth rushed back to his memory. He never tired of reading that precious record of the life and death of his friend of friends. He added from his well-stored mind many particulars which had transpired in the intimacy of their friendship, and

which the interposition of death had made honorable to unveil.

A. D. 1654, *Aug.* 22. Claver has lain on a bed of martyrdom well-nigh four years ! The day was fast approaching when he would be allowed to exclaim, " Let thy servant, O Lord, depart ! " On the day of the above date, the royal galleons arrived from Spain and anchored in port at Carthagena. The first man to leap on shore was Diego Ramirez Farina, a Jesuit, Almoner to the court of Philip IV., and his Preacher in ordinary. The wonderful and heroic deeds of Peter Claver had been rehearsed at the Spanish court. Bound to Claver by the ties of fellowship, himself a man of lofty aspirations, pure life, fervent heart, and indomitable will, he chafed under the frivolities, insincerity, and bigotry, which surrounded the throne, and he nobly volunteered to become Claver's successor in the care of the transported Africans at Carthagena. He changed the king's

court for the slave's pen! But why not? Had not both king and negro souls made in the same likeness?

No sooner did the old Apostle, all but dying, hear of Farina's arrival than, creeping away from his couch, he dragged himself to the guests' quarter, and on his knees welcomed his successor, thanked and blessed him for the devotedness of his resolution. Diego was astonished at the sight; but when he heard the name of that walking shadow, he also threw himself on his knees before blessed Claver, and a novel Elisha begged of his Elias to bless him and to obtain of God that his spirit may rest upon the new servant of the negroes. A large company, among them the highest officers of the province, witnessed the meeting. Their hearts were thrilled, and tears rolled down their manly cheeks.

Claver then tottered back to his bed, and to Gonzalez, who had faithfully worked with him for many years, emphatically declared

that his day was over, his work done, and night fast falling upon him.

Yet as a last act of love he wished to bid farewell to his dear sick in the hospitals. And thither he went, riding a donkey, and supported on each side by two faithful Africans. He was carried on his rounds to the beds, and spoke to every one the last word of comfort and benediction. Solemn was the occasion, and the subdued sobs and the silent tears spoke loud enough of the pain of their hearts in being torn from their father.

September 6. For a last time Peter Claver wishes to receive the Holy Sacrament on his knees, before the altar of that church where he had labored so faithfully and so many years of his precious and devoted life. Long did he remain there in intimate communing with his God in prayer.

On his way back to his room, "Well, Gonzalez," said he, turning to his companion, "what can I do for you in heaven? I am going!"

Laid on his couch he spoke no more.

But he evidently prayed, and his heart was dwelling in heaven, when, at dawn of the ninth, calmly, without a struggle, his eyes turned towards the mansions of the Father, with the sweetest look he resigned his pure spirit into the hand of Him whom he had so fervently loved and served, and went forward full of confidence to receive the reward of his long services in behalf of his fellow-creatures.

And thus ended the life of

PETER CLAVER,

THE SLAVE OF THE NEGROES FOREVER !

The honors paid to his remains were such that their grandeur has never been surpassed in Carthagera ; and the record of his virtues and his devotedness to the forlorn African slave is read and admired in the languages of all civilized nations.

NOTE. — The *Monthly*, a Catholic periodical published in London, contains, in the number for October, 1867, a paper written by a friend of mine, which will afford some information in addition to what is given in the text. The article is headed "Scenes from a Missionary Journal in South America." It does not give any experience of New Grenada ; but the results of the missionary's researches in Brazil will help the reader of our sketch to form a true idea of the state of things in Carthagená. He writes: "*The Brazilians, or their fathers, came from Portugal at a time when that once noble and deeply religious nation had entered on its decay, and over and above their decrepit political institutions, they had the misfortune to bring with them to this virgin land, the curse of African slavery. Between worthless masters and brutalized slaves this magnificent country would appear doomed to a state of eternal torpor or rapid decay, were it not for the energy and vitality*

of the new race (fifteen or twenty thousand new settlers, chiefly from Rhenish provinces) which is fast spreading itself over its most fertile regions."

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